

ON THE CANADIAN ROCKY MOUNTAINS NORTH OF
THE YELLOW HEAD PASS.

By J. NORMAN COLLIE.

(Read before the Alpine Club, December 10, 1911.)

DURING the last twenty-five years the Rocky Mountains in Canada have become accessible to the ordinary traveller, owing to the fact that railways have been built both on their eastern and western sides. The history of this 'Great Lone Land' before that time is practically the history of the fur trade; though after 1858 the prospector wandered through many of the valleys leading up to the main chain of the Rocky Mountains, but he has left but little information of the country. Even at the present day most of the land lying within twenty miles of the watershed is almost unknown. No one lives there, and Indians seldom penetrate into these mountain fastnesses; the land is deserted.

The first man to cross the Canadian Rockies was Sir Alexander Mackenzie, in 1793; he made use of the passes at the head-waters of the Peace River. Much knowledge can also be obtained about this country from the diaries of Alexander Henry, a hunter of the North-West Company from 1799-1814. David Thomson, official geographer of the same company, also collected an immense amount of information about the same districts. He discovered the Columbia River's source and crossed the mountains by more than one pass; his greatest achievement was a 'Map of the N.W. Territory of the Province of Canada.' In 1809 Simon Fraser and Jules Quesnel explored the Fraser River to its mouth. Much also can be found about the mountains in Alexander Ross's book, 'The Fur-hunters of the Far West.'

Up to 1858 this part of Canada belonged to the Hudson Bay Company, and, together with the North-West Company, they built forts in various parts of the mountains, where the fur could be collected. But in 1858 British Columbia became a Crown Colony, and the land was thrown open to the miner and the settler as well as the hunter. A great influx of miners in 1858 took place into the Cariboo district in northern British Columbia. A few, it is true, crossed the Rocky Mountains

from the E., but the majority came from California and the western States up the Pacific coast.

About this time, 1857, Captain Palliser was sent out by the English Government to explore all the country lying between the northern branch of the Saskatchewan and the frontier of the United States, and between the Red River and the Rocky Mountains, and to find if there were any practical passes available for horses across the mountains to British Columbia. Dr. Hector, who was with the expedition, made many journeys into the mountains, and the accounts that he has left in 'Palliser's Journals' are the most important we possess of the Canadian Rockies in those days.

In 1871 British Columbia entered the Dominion of Canada, and at once a survey was started for a trans-continental railway. The valleys into the mountains were explored in every direction, and no less than eleven different passes were actually surveyed, from the Peace River in the N. to the Crow's Nest Pass in the S. In 1886 the Canadian Pacific trans-continental railway was opened. But little advantage was taken of the opportunities offered, as far as mountain exploration was concerned.

Dr. Dawson, the head of the Canadian Survey, it is true, published a very full report on the physical and geographical portion of the Rocky Mountains between latitudes 49° and $51^{\circ} 30''$ (1886).

Mr. R. G. M'Connell, in 1886, made a detailed examination of the Bow River Pass and the vicinity; and in 1898 Mr. McEvoy surveyed the Yellow Head Pass and measured the height of Mt. Robson, 13,700 ft.

The pioneer of the mountaineers was Professor Coleman, of Toronto; he first visited the Canadian Rockies in 1884 and climbed Castle Mountain in the Bow Valley. Since then, for a quarter of a century, he has been climbing and exploring; he has covered an immense amount of country, and has recently published an account of it in a most delightful book, 'The Canadian Rockies.'

It is true however that the first account of an ascent in the Canadian Rockies was many years before. David Douglas, the naturalist, on May 1, 1827, ascended Mt. Brown on the Athabasca Pass; he believed that the height he had attained was between 16,000–17,000 ft.; but Professor Coleman, in 1892, proved that the true height of Mt. Brown was only a little over 9000 ft.

From 1887–1897 a few of the peaks near the Canadian Pacific



Dr. J. Norman Collie. photo.

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SUNSET ON THE YELLOW HEAD PASS.

railway were climbed. Wilcox had discovered Mt. Assiniboine, and the Appalachian Club of Boston had done good work amongst the mountains near the railway.

But there were still hundreds of miles of the Canadian Rockies that were marked on the map like a long centipede practically unexplored. Few people appreciate the enormous area in Canada that at the present day is unknown. Only twenty years ago Dr. Dawson wrote: 'In Canada there are 3,470,000 square miles, of which 954,000 square miles (exclusive of the inhospitable Arctic portions) is for all practical purposes entirely unknown.' It was in the year 1897 that I first went to the Rocky Mountains. I went N. from Laggan, on the Canadian Pacific railway, with Mr. Baker as far as the source of the Saskatchewan River, having seen farther north from the summit of a peak just N. of the railway (which I had climbed with Professor Dixon, Professor Fay, and several members of the Appalachian Club) high snow mountains. Baker and I explored the Freshfield group, and as far as we could see to the northward were an endless series of peaks. The whole of the country was unexplored; the only man who had been there before us and left any record was Hector, in 1860.

In 1898 I returned with Mr. H. E. M. Stutfield and Mr. H. Woolley. We explored as far as the head-waters of the Athabasca, discovered many new peaks, and the largest snow-field yet known in the Rocky Mountains. This great tract of ice and snow drains into three oceans—the Pacific, the Arctic, and into Hudson Bay (or the Atlantic), for it feeds the Columbia, the Athabasca, and the Saskatchewan Rivers. N. of this country as far as the Yellow Head Pass the mountains were better known. Just to the N. of this large snow-field Dr. Habel, in 1901, explored the western source of the Athabasca; in 1892 Professor Coleman had been at Fortress Lake and the Athabasca Pass. Between the Athabasca and the Yellow Head Pass there is only one high mountain, Mt. Geikie, 11,000 ft., that McEvoy had mapped in 1898. The really unexplored mountain range begins again N. of Mt. Robson and the Yellow Head Pass. In 1902, together with H. E. M. Stutfield and H. Woolley, I climbed many of the high peaks at the source of the Saskatchewan. Up till then we had been finding out how it was possible to get at the high mountains, and the discovery of them and finding out which valley one had to follow in order to reach them had taken up most of our time.

I always had intended to visit the main range N. of the Yellow

Head Pass, but it was out of the question; the land lay too far from the railway, and it would take all the time I could spare to get there and back again. Edmonton, where the railway ended, was over two hundred miles from the pass, and in 1909 Mr. Mumm took nearly a month travelling this distance on his way to Mt. Robson. In 1910 however the Grand Trunk Pacific railway was opened as far as Wolf Creek, about half-way to the Yellow Head Pass, and the opportunity I had been waiting over ten years for at last arrived. Mumm and I, on July 17, 1910, started with pack-horses from Wolf Creek. We took with us a camp outfit and provisions to last us two months. With us came Moritz Inderbinen, a Swiss guide, and Fred Stephens, G. Swain, John Yates and Allan McConnochie; the last four to look after the horses, cut trail, and manage the camp.

Our route lay along the valley of the Athabasca till we came to the Miette River; this we ascended to the Yellow Head Pass. Following down a tributary of the Fraser River, we came to the Yellow Head Lakes. Here we stopped for a day and Mumm and Moritz Inderbinen climbed the Yellow Head Mountain on the N. side of the valley. From it a splendid view of the great precipices of Mt. Geikie was seen. This Yellow Head Mountain was probably the one ascended by McEvoy (Geological Survey of Canada, Part D, Annual Report, Vol. xi. 1900, p. 14). On August 1 we camped just short of Moose Lake, on the W. side of the Moose River, and from here struck northwards by a route to Mt. Robson discovered by Yates two years previously when with Professor Coleman. We climbed a peak on the E. side of the Moose Valley, partly after goat, and partly in order to get some idea of the surrounding country, but we were unable to see Mt. Robson on account of the clouds that covered it. However, away to the W. beyond Tete Jaune Cache and the Fraser River, I saw for the first time the Cariboo Mountains, and I was surprised to see how fine they were. From many of the Rockies further S. I had seen the Selkirk range, but they are not, in my opinion, at all equal to the Cariboo group. Two especially fine peaks could be seen; a great snow-field with a grand glacier coming down eastwards towards the Fraser River. This mountain land should prove a great field for the mountaineer. Up to the present, as far as I know, not a white man has ever penetrated into its fastnesses. I have heard stories of how even the most adventurous of prospectors have been turned back. This is not surprising to anyone

who has had to deal with dense British Columbia forest. Huge fallen trees, thick underbrush full of that pest the devil's club, turbulent glacier streams, can render a valley quite impassable. Anyone who has attempted to reach the high mountains on the W. of the watershed, either in the Selkirks along the Columbia River or in the Rockies, knows that he will never try again. Possibly however, when the Grand Trunk Pacific railway has opened up the Fraser Valley, it will be possible to get men who, with two-handed saws and axes, can clear a trail, but both money and time will have to be spent before anyone will win to this magnificent group. It will, though, be well worth accomplishing, for the Cariboo Mountains are certainly as high—perhaps even higher—than the Selkirks; the peaks are finer shaped, and there are some narrow gorges (especially one to the N. end of the group) that must afford grand scenery. If what is marked on McEvoy's map be true—namely, that they belong to the Archaean formation—they are certain to possess fine form, for the Archaean rock weathers into the most picturesque details.

On August 7 we crossed a pass at the head of the E. branch of the Moose River; this took us back again to the E. side of the watershed, and descending on the other side we came to the Smoky River. This we followed up to its source in the great glacier of Mt. Robson. All existing maps of this piece of country, with the exception of Professor Coleman's, are entirely wrong about this part of the mountains. The watershed of the main chain runs N.W. from the Yellow Head Pass, twisting about a good deal, and finally, in ordinary years, running to the summit of Mt. Robson. But there are years when Mt. Robson is entirely in British Columbia, and none of the melted snow from it ever flows eastward. This was the case in 1910. The glacier stream in 1910 flowed entirely down the Grand Forks to the Fraser River. In 1909 nearly the whole of it went down the Smoky River; so that the Robson glacier one year was on the eastern, and the next year it was on the western watershed of the Rocky Mountains. The weather round Mt. Robson is proverbially bad. Professor Coleman's photographs in 1908 of his camp at the bottom of the valley underneath the great peak show about a foot of snow over the tent and trees. Mumm in 1909 was treated in a similar manner, and we had no better fortune in 1910.

We, of course, wished to climb this monarch of the Rockies, but we could see the snow from recent storms still on the lower rocks, and Mt. Robson, like the Dent Blanche, is not a

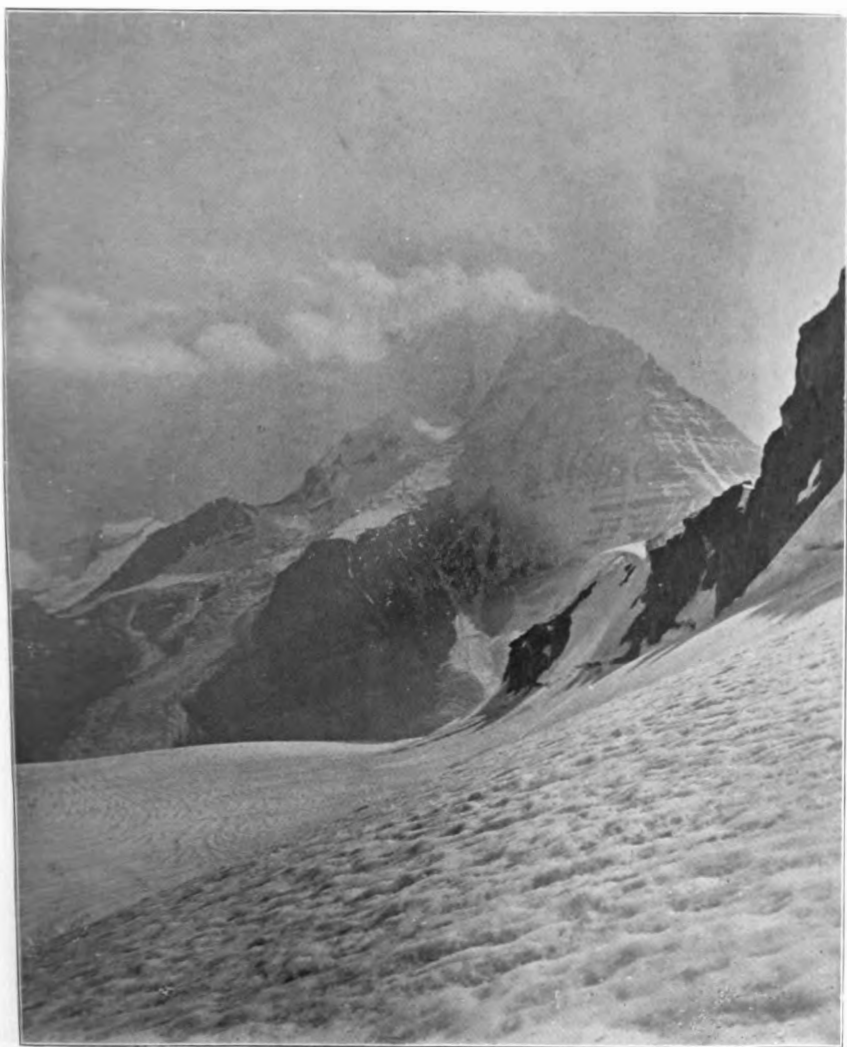
peak to attempt except in the most settled weather. The summit is a narrow ridge with hopeless precipices on the E. side, whilst on the N. and N.W. some excessively steep rock ribs run up to this summit ridge. As far as I have seen, it must always be a difficult climb and often a dangerous one, and as one has to start on the western side at an altitude below 3000 ft. and climb to 13,700 ft. it is also a long one.

Personally, I believe that the safest and best route is that first tried by Professor Coleman up a glacier on the S.W. corner of the peak; this would lead to high up on the southern ridge, just above where Professor Coleman stopped when, a year later, he made his attempt on the south-eastern side, also above where Mumm and his party stopped a year later still, in 1909. During the time we were waiting for the snow to clear off Mt. Robson we made several expeditions; we ascended a rock peak behind our camp on the N. We made one attempt at making a camp on Mt. Robson, but were driven out of it the next morning by rain and snow that had lasted the whole night.

Another peak—probably the third highest in the Robson group (the Horn is the second highest)—we had seen lying far back at the head of a large glacier that emptied into the Grand Forks. This we ascended on August 19, Stephens, Yates, and Swain coming with us. The haze in the air prevented our seeing very far, but we could make out some fine peaks about fifteen to twenty miles farther N.; also just N. of our mountain lay a pass into British Columbia that was below tree-level.

After this the weather became much worse; after three wet days it took to heavy snow, we were snowed up in our camp, and any chance we had of ascending Mt. Robson disappeared. A few days later we tried to ascend the Robson Glacier, with the intention of climbing a shapely snow peak at its head that has been called Mt. Resplendent. We started early in the morning, but the higher we went the worse and the deeper the snow became, and finally, at three in the afternoon, tired out, we had to turn and make our way back to the camp.

Climbing on the high peaks was out of the question. We therefore determined to strike N. down the Smoky River and ascend such valleys as would be likely to lead us to the watershed or to passes over the mountains. We left Robson on August 26, and started down the Smoky River into the unknown land. Our first attempt to ascend a side valley was not successful, owing to the dense forest. Further N. we had better luck. Following a large stream that came from the W.



Dr. J Norman Collie, photo.

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MT. ROBSON, FROM THE NORTH.

we discovered a splendid snow mountain that Yates named Mt. Bess, also a large glacier on the E. side of the mountain. Another fact which was rather a surprise to us was that right under the almost perpendicular limestone precipices of Mt. Bess on the S. side was an easy pass over the watershed into British Columbia. It is below tree-line and covered with pine forest.

By this time it was necessary to think of returning to civilisation, and the question arose: should we return by the route by which we had come into the mountains, or should we risk trying to work eastwards and hit the Athabasca at either Jasper House or even lower down at Brulé Lake? If we chose the latter route it would mean that we should have to find some pass out of the Smoky Valley to the E., so as to get on to the head-waters of the Stoney River. Yates had heard from some Indians that such a pass existed, but where it was we did not know. What we did know was, that should we miss the Stoney River we should probably be on the head-waters of the Sulphur River, that runs N. to the Smoky Valley again, far to the N. of where we were, and hundreds of miles from Edmonton. We decided however to try, and on September 2 we started down the Smoky River, intending to turn E. up the first promising-looking valley, in the hopes that we should find a pass at its head over which we could take the horses. We found a very beautiful lake in our side valley with two infinitesimal islands, on each of which was one fir tree. Yates, who is the best guide in unknown country I have ever met, by some unaccountable instinct refused to follow the valley to its head and turned up a side valley; two days later he proved to be right, for we crossed an easy pass above tree-line on an old and well-worn Indian trail, descending on the other side into a beautiful valley down which a fine stream ran through pine woods. On the western side of this valley are several glaciers, and as our valley seemed to be leading in the right direction we were satisfied. But some distance down the valley the river however turned again to the N.E., and for the next three days we were uncertain whether after all we had not hit the Sulphur River by mistake. But in the end it proved that Yates had guided us right through about one hundred miles of new country and had discovered a very useful and good trail from the Athabasca to the head-waters of the Smoky River. We did not follow the Stoney River to where it joins the Athabasca, but crossed a low pass to the head-waters of the Hay River;

then across to Solomon Creek, and finally we reached the Athabasca at Brulé Lake on September 16. Next summer Mumm and I decided to utilise our new route to the Smoky River. We however made one small difference: we crossed the Athabasca higher up near Jasper House, where there was a ferry, and cut our way up the lower twenty-five miles of the Stoney Valley that the year before we had avoided by going to Brulé Lake. The party was the same, with the exception of G. Swain, who did not come with us.

We started up the Stoney River on July 24. With us, for a short distance, came J. Smith, who had prospected up this portion of the Stoney and knew the country. He could help us, being a good axe-man, in cutting a trail through the miles of fallen and burnt timber that had stopped us the year before from coming down this last portion of the river. It took us seven days to accomplish the twenty-five miles that lay between the Athabasca and our old trail of the year before. Here Smith left us and returned to civilisation. On our way up we passed some fine falls on the Stoney River. Hector mentions these in 'Palliser's Journals' (p. 126). On August 4 we reached the summit of the pass leading over to the Smoky River. We camped here for three days to give the horses a rest, and also to climb a rock peak from which we hoped to see the surrounding country and to find out where we were with regard to Mt. Robson. All the time we had been travelling in deep valleys that were always changing their direction, and only the peaks on each side of the valley could be seen. On August 7 we ascended the rock peak on the E. side of the pass. I have named it Mt. Hoodoo, after a bull-dog of that name, who much against his will had to be taken to the top of the peak. We could not help ourselves, for he followed our tracks from camp and joined us just below the very precipitous rock summit, that is bare rock set at a very steep angle. He would not go back, so we carefully tied him to the end of the rope and he was pulled up bodily most of the way.

From the summit we were rather surprised to find that we were nearly due N. of Mt. Robson. Mt. Bess of the year before we saw in the distance, and it obviously was only one peak and the most southerly of a group of high snow mountains, one a little to the N. being evidently higher. Glaciers could be seen in more places than one descending to the creeks that led to the Smoky River.

So we started for the Smoky River with the intention of ascending one of those creeks that came down from the foot



Dr. J. Norman Collie photo.

SNOW PEAK, FROM THE ICEFIELD.

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of this new peak. On August 11 we camped at the snout of a great glacier that lies at the foot of the high snow peak. This glacier is a magnificent one, descending in a series of great ice-falls. It is also the biggest I have seen in the Canadian Rockies, although it is possible that the one at the head of the Bush Valley, that comes from the Columbia ice-field, may be bigger. Here we stopped ten days and explored the country in the neighbourhood. The glacier is evidently advancing and has never in recent times been much higher than at present. Most of the large glaciers I have seen during the last fourteen years in the Rocky Mountains also seem to be advancing.

Several expeditions were made up the glacier. Mumm went to a pass at the head of a side glacier that comes into the main glacier on the S. side. I went to a pass lying nearly N. of our camp; the stream on the other side flows N., but is joined a little distance down by one coming from a glacier on the W.; it is obviously a tributary of the Smoky River.

We also made several expeditions up the great glacier. About two miles from the bottom is the first ice-fall, and about a mile farther up is the second and larger of the two. The first can be easily turned on the N. side, but the second is much more difficult, for a precipice of rock comes down on the same side from the peak above and abuts into the ice. There is a moderately easy way between the ice and the rock, but it is distinctly dangerous, being overhung by huge seracs and walls of ice that are perpetually falling, sending down hundreds of tons of ice that sweep the route from top to bottom.

On August 18, starting before sunrise with Yates and Inderbinen, we ascended above this second ice-fall, finally finding ourselves on a great plateau of level snow that stretched for miles to the north and west, and surrounded by a series of rock and snow peaks. No wonder the glacier was so large; it had to empty all the ice and snow from this great sea of frozen water.

The peak we wished to climb was one on the W. side of this snow-field; we could see an easy route up the highest peak of the group that lay to the S. of us, but the farther-off mountain in the west was nearly as high, and had this advantage—it would give us a splendid view into the unknown valleys on the W. side of the Canadian Rockies. So for four miles we trudged across the snow-field towards a col on the S. side of the peak we wished to climb. This we finally reached, a cairn was built there, and following an easy arête we came to the summit. The day was wonderfully clear, we could see

into the far distance in every direction. To the N. lay part of the snow-field and the surrounding mountains. Beyond the range became much lower, and it was not until about twenty miles further N. that really big mountains and large glaciers could again be seen. On the E. was the great valley of the Smoky River running northwards into the far distance. To the S. and quite close was the highest peak of the group, two or three hundred feet higher than the peak we were on. A little further off was Mt. Bess, dome-shaped and flanked with precipices, and the same altitude as we were. Far away Mt. Robson rose a head and shoulders higher than everything, also the Horn and the snow peak we had climbed in 1910. Again we saw beyond the valley of the Fraser the beautiful Cariboo Mountains, mysterious and lonely, waiting for the time when they too would be first trodden by the foot of man.

Our next intention was to descend the Smoky Valley, and if possible ascend the next large creek that drained the country on the north of the group of mountains we were in. But we found that the travelling was bad, we could see nothing ahead of us but burnt timber and probably muskegs, and the time at our disposal was short. So we decided to spend our last week before returning in something that we knew we could do, and retraced our steps up the valley towards Mt. Bess and the pass we had discovered the year before. We also wished to explore a fascinating piece of country that lay on the W. of the group of mountains we had been on; this we had seen from the summit of the peak we had climbed.

We reached the pass on August 24, and two days later in most brilliant weather we ascended Mt. Bess. Starting from the pass with Yates and Inderbinen, we went in a westerly direction, so as to get to the top of a spur of the big mountain. The walking was abominable, the loose pieces of sandstone quartzite of which the hill is made were most exasperating. On the summit we built a large cairn that can be seen against the sky-line from the pass. Beyond this the real climbing began, and the rock changed to limestone. We had to make our way up steep slopes of snow, and then, in order to finally get on to the S.W. arête high up, to climb up several precipitous bands of rock. Fortunately small gullies helped us, and after a good deal of ice-work Inderbinen brought us out safely on to the ridge that led up easily to the final summit. We also left a small cairn on some of the highest rocks, and hidden in it a small bottle with our names inside. I put mine on a golf card of the St. Andrews links, with a map of the



Dr. J. Norman Collie, photo.

MT. ROBSON, FROM THE SUMMIT OF MT BESS.

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course marked on it. I have never been on a high summit in more perfect weather. Not a breath of wind, and not in the least cold, small clouds just sufficient to prevent too much sunshine, and a marvellously clear atmosphere—a thing not common in the Rocky Mountains, for somewhere amongst the foot hills there is certain to be a forest fire, and the smoke thus produced will blot out all distant views. But we could see mountains one hundred miles away in every direction. For the first time, through a break in the hills to the E., I saw the level pine forests stretching away to the prairie. The Cariboo Mountains were as usual especially fine. Far away to the S. was a grand mountain in the Selwyn range with a great glacier on its E. and north-eastern faces. Mt. Geikie towered up, showing his grim precipices plainly through the clear air, and far away in the dim distance at the head of the Athabasca was a shapely snow pyramid that looked like Mt. Columbia. As we gazed in every direction over peaks, glaciers, snowfields, and valleys we recognised how much remained still to be done in this new land; as far as I was aware, out of the innumerable mountains that we could see spread out before us, only two, Mt. Columbia and Mt. Robson, had ever been climbed by anyone except ourselves.

Next we moved our camp to the W. side of Mt. Bess, following an old Indian trail that came from the Smoky River over the pass. This trail must have been at one time an important one, but has been deserted for many years, and when we found it in 1910 the old teepee poles on the summit of the pass were lying embedded in the ground and rotten, not having been used for at least thirty years; the trail, moreover, was overgrown and small trees had occasionally grown up in the middle of it. Where this trail goes to is still a mystery; does it finally follow down one of the canyons of the west to the Fraser River, or does it bend back N. of our new group of mountains and so reach the Smoky River once more? After leaving the pass it does not descend on the other side, but climbing for about 600 ft. up the hillside on the right crosses a spur of Mt. Bess and then descending goes to a mysterious valley that runs N., skirting the W. side of the whole of the group of mountains N. of Mt. Bess. Further to the N. this valley turns slightly to the E., but neither from the summit of Mt. Bess nor the snow peak we had been on farther north could I discover where it broke through the range that divided it from the Fraser River. It is most probable that it is the head-waters of the Beaver, a tributary of the Fraser River, but it may be a tributary of the

Smoky River, in spite of the fact that it lies on the W. side of the main range, for the watershed of the Rocky Mountains plays strange tricks, and one never can be sure where the dividing line may be.

Lying to the S.W. of this mysterious valley and between it and the next creek to the S., Horse Creek, lies a curious piece of country. Instead of being a series of peaks it is a rolling moor covered with grass. Over this one can walk for miles, surrounded by the great snow mountains, and with deep pine-clad valleys on both sides, and occasional glimpses through gaps in the mountains of the far-distant glaciers.

But by this time we had to think of returning to Edmonton, and on September 2 started on our homeward journey. During the whole time till we got on to the cars at Prairie Creek on August 16 the weather was wonderfully fine and the autumn colouring of the poplars every day became more and more brilliant. This perfect blaze of yellows and golden oranges, occasionally mixed with scarlet and crimson, that in the beginning of September covers the Athabasca country, is extraordinarily beautiful; those who have never seen it have no conception of the brilliance the clear air adds to the effect that fades away gradually into far distances of blue hills and skies, where the white clouds sharply cut the horizon. We came back by the same route we had gone in by, and followed the Stoney River till we came to where Smith had left us on our journey into the mountains. Here we, instead of going down the last twenty-five miles of the Stoney, again crossed over to the head-waters of the Hay River and to a beautiful lake that is said to be full of fish. However, we were unsuccessful in our fishing, but lower down the Hay River caught plenty of fine trout, some over three pounds weight. Going over the divide between Hay River and Solomon Creek we went down the latter, and finally crossed the Athabasca opposite Prairie Creek. Our wanderings were at an end.

Those who have spent their time in tents in a new land will know how hard it is to suffer the limitations of civilisation after the freedom of the wilds. Our small world was ended for the time being: all the small jokes, the personal character, and the good-fellowship that means so much when half a dozen good friends have lived together for weeks: to all this we had to say good-bye. But once a wanderer always a wanderer, the fever has got into the blood. As one sits in one's armchair on the winter evenings the dreams of the camp life return once more, of the tepee with a roaring fire and the door snugly

closed ; of Fred's stories, of John's leisurely methods of playing poker, of Moritz's fears that we were lost in a strange land and that the 'grub pile' was very low ; all these small happenings, as they come back to one, stir the remembrances of the life in the wilds ; it mattered little to one that the snow was racing round the tent and the fir trees singing in the wind outside ; inside all was well with us both in mind and body ; on the morrow the sky would have cleared, the great mountains would glisten in their new robe of snow, the sun would shine over the fair valleys and the trail that led through the mighty pine woods, the glades by the side of fair lakes and the open uplands of the passes would call us ever onward. Yes ! a wanderer's dreams are good dreams, and fortunate are those who have stored up in their memory dreams of such a land, it is one of the most beautiful of mountain countries, and still has the mystery of the unknown clinging about it. There is plenty of room at present for everyone who cares to wander through its fastnesses ; it is a land of great mountains and great woods, of lakes and glaciers and rushing rivers, of rain and snow and blue skies, and it is still a land of mystery—a 'Land of the Far West.'

A WEEK'S EXPLORATION ON THE COOLIN.

BY J. M. ARCHER THOMSON.

SHORTLY after our return from the Alps, H. O. Jones and I, with Miss B. Jones, journeyed to the Isle of Skye, there to finish our mountaineering holiday. L. G. Shadbolt, A. McLaren, and E. S. Reynolds joined us at Sligachan, which became our base.

The hotel is comfortable ; the welcome extended is not so warm as to cause embarrassment, and quite sufficient value is set upon tradition. Aversion from late breakfasting and activity on the Sabbath brought us into touch with the management. However, our boldness was graciously condoned, because, though mountaineers, we so far possessed the *savoir-vivre* of the tourist or the fisherman that we never once returned in the evening late for dinner.

Those acquainted with Skye look upon September as a month of doubtful promise. The weather we happened upon was tolerable. On our last day, already reserved for historical